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ABSTRACT

This keynote address presents three key elements to arts education and educational reform. These are: partnerships, compassion, and imagination. There is a symbiotic relationship, or partnership, between schools and businesses, political offices, cultural institutions, and other community organizations. These partners, having a stake in public education, must be made aware of the importance of the arts to education. Compassion, requires that potential partners understand the needs and concerns of each others's lives. Compassion also recognizes that different levels and kinds of support are needed to enable students to reach standards which are uniform for all. Imagination, which is the essence of the arts, must be used to promote and support the arts. The address is followed by position statements of the California Arts Council, the California Department of Education, and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts. (MM)

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# The Arts

ED 403 167

# Partnerships As a Catalyst for Educational Reform

*Keynote address by*

Ramon C. Cortines, Chancellor
New York City Public Schools

Governor's Conference on the Arts V
March 25, 1994
Los Angeles

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**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**
**Sacramento, 1994**



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# The Arts

## Partnerships As a Catalyst for Educational Reform

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# Introduction

The California Arts Council, in an effort to promote dialogue on the relevance of the arts, has presented a series of Governor's Conferences on the Arts. These conferences have assembled leaders from across the country to help California artists and educators focus on national and international trends that affect the arts.

The most recent of these, the Governor's Conference on the Arts V, was dedicated to the topic of arts in education. Titled The Arts: Partnerships As a Catalyst for Educational Reform, the conference was presented in collaboration with the California Department of Education and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts on March 25–26, 1994, at the University of California, Los Angeles. The conference's planning itself was a partnership model, as is the ongoing collaboration between the California Arts Council and the Department of Education to create a new arts-in-education grants program to be administered by the California Arts Council.

The keynote speaker at the conference was Ramon C. Cortines, Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, whose inspiring words follow. Other speakers included A. Graham Down, President of the Council for Basic Education; Dennie Palmer Wolf of the Performance Assessment Collaborative of Education (PACE); and David O'Fallon, Staff Director for the National Arts Education Partnership Working Groups at the Kennedy Center.

A statewide model of arts partnerships was presented by South Carolina. Many California presenters, including representatives of rural areas, large cities, counties, and school districts, spoke of effective partnerships.

Michael Greene, President of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, spoke passionately about arts education and the related role of the entertainment industry, while dancer/choreographer Bella Lewitzky presented an artist's viewpoint. Business, community, and school partnerships were explored, and the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts's public/private collaboration was presented. Arts performances, working sessions, and networking rounded out a successful two-day conference.

The conference underscored the sentiments of Dr. Cortines:

> But we are not here now to talk of what we know. We are here to put all of our heads together and plan how to convert what we know into practical reality in children's lives, classrooms, and schools throughout America. For while we know that all children need and deserve to experience the power and beauty of the arts in their lives, we also know that a great many children—of all colors and ages and languages, with and without disabilities, in schools of every size and configuration—are missing out on a great *many* things that they need and deserve in their lives and in schools today. The issues surrounding arts education in our nation's schools are, at base, one with the issues of public education generally.

# Address by Ramon C. Cortines

It is both an honor and a challenge to speak among you—so many old friends, colleagues, and partners-in-arms in the struggle to preserve and develop meaningful arts education for the youth of today and tomorrow. For all of us here today represent "The Converted": the "Choir" to which one does *not* need to preach of the transformative value of arts education in children's lives.

I would guess that every person in this room has seen the life of at least one child irrevocably changed by the power of a brush stroke, the discipline of a dance step, the expressive opportunities of music, the searing courage and vitality of theater. We know that to live full lives, all children—indeed, all people—need opportunities to experience, appreciate, create, and reflect upon art.

But we are not here now to talk of what we know. We are here to put all of our heads together and plan how to convert what we know into practical reality in children's lives, classrooms, and schools throughout America. For while we know that all children need and deserve to experience the power and beauty of the arts in their lives, we also know that a great many children—of all colors and ages and languages, with and without disabilities, in schools of every size and configuration—are missing out on a great *many* things that they need and deserve in their lives and in schools today. The issues surrounding arts education in our nation's schools are, at base, one with the issues of public education generally. I want to speak today about three key elements to arts education development and educational reform: **partnerships, compassion,** and **imagination.**

Arts education—and by this I mean education *in* the arts and education *through* the arts; both art for art's sake and art for the sake of children and learning: the perpetuation of civilization, values, beliefs, the healing of social ills, teaching about empathy and history

and life-and-death issues—is nothing short of critical. I am sure we agree. What we need to be even clearer about, however, is that *arts education is nothing short of education.*

Arts education is not a frill or an add-on. And neither is it "the 4th R," to be added or integrated into education as it already exists in most schools today:

> **The process of arts education *is* education. And enabling our schools to really teach with and through the arts can transform education as we know it today.**

I ask that you keep this vision in mind—that arts education is a profound change agent, that pushing, prodding, supporting, insisting, and enabling our schools to teach the arts will transform education—as we review these critical issues and components of educational change: **partnerships, compassion,** and **imagination**.

**Partnerships** are critical to educational success. We must dramatically increase the number of individuals and organizations that feel they have a stake in public education. We who labor in public education know how high the stakes are: that the freedom of any individual to walk and live in safety, to do his or her banking or shopping with ease, to make real choices about political leadership, entertainment or recreation, depends on the effectiveness of public education. If our public schools fail, our society fails.

I encourage you to use every opportunity to enjoin your neighbors, friends, business associates, and other community members to become involved, to become a stakeholder in public education. Education is the responsibility of the entire community. When we speak of community responsibility for arts education—and we must be ruthless in insisting that this is a *community* responsibility, and not just the responsibility of the schools—let us be explicit. If we neglect our youth, we neglect our *selves,* we fail as a society to invest in the perpetuation of what we believe in, and what we have had the privilege of benefiting from throughout our lives.

In San Francisco we had a marvelous program that I have imported to New York City, in which we invite business and other community leaders to be "Principal for a Day" and learn firsthand what the challenges and strengths of our city's schools and children are really like. This is a tremendous vehicle for building partnerships between schools and businesses, political offices, cultural institutions, and other community organizations.

Quality arts education simply cannot exist without strong partnerships. Students and staff alike need to meet and get to know individual artists—dancers, percussionists, sculptors, filmmakers, actors, and designers—and community institutions like museums, symphonies, dance companies, studios, and other cultural organizations. The pleasure of engaging with the arts must be fully available to young people in our schools. And by the same token, individual artists and community and cultural organizations need the young people in our schools. They are literally the audiences of tomorrow. A lack of equity and access today means a lack of audience—ticket buyers, collectors, museum-goers—tomorrow. Nowhere is the symbiotic relationship between public schools and private enterprise more obvious than in arts education.

I was trained to see beauty. I am privileged to apprehend and recognize beauty when, for instance, I run across the Brooklyn Bridge and glimpse the serpentine pattern of the clouds gathering across Manhattan's East River. I surround myself with art, and I own marvelous collections that inspire and feed my soul on a daily basis. I consider myself blessed to enjoy so rich a life; I am thankful for all the wonder the arts have brought to my own life. I also recognize, humbly but pragmatically, that collectors like me are vital to the economic and cultural vitality of this nation. So the arts are vital to me and, in my own personal way, I am vital to the arts.

This critical symbiosis is everywhere apparent. Just as a great many arts institutions are already involved in education, many businesses are already supporters of the arts; they are patrons of specific dance or theater companies, they collect works of visual art, they underwrite subscriptions and museum memberships for their employees. These relationships must be nurtured and deepened into true partnerships wherein the partners act not from a sense of obligation, charity, or hope, but because their own bread and butter—*and their joy*—come through daily interaction and interdependence.

Whatever you are already doing to develop partners can be deepened: open your doors a little wider; show your flaws, share your decision-making processes. Genuine partnerships take a great deal of time and risk, because they ultimately live or die on the basis of *trust.* But real partnerships are what we need to make arts education authentic, and to make public education work. If our nation's museums do not become extended classrooms, then over time we will not *have* museums . . . or classrooms.

**Compassion** is critical to the building of partnerships, and to the forging of workable policy for arts education and for education in general. Since coming to New York City, I have seen a new face and a new need for compassion. In a city as large and filled with art and culture as New York, home to so many of the world's most distinguished museums and performing arts companies, our students are languishing for lack of high-quality, ongoing, developmentally appropriate, dependable arts education in their schools. While there are a number of extraordinarily talented teachers and powerful programs in some schools, very few schools offer sequential arts education to all of their students on a regular basis.

Why is this? To some degree, a lack of resources, mandates, or public policy in support of arts education underscores the chasm between the richness of New York City's cultural resources and the paucity of arts education in our public schools. But our children also

suffer—and this is the most unacceptable part of the problem—from the failure of arts educators *in the school system* and arts educators *in the cultural community* to face one another with consistent understanding and compassion. A tangled skein of suspicion—years, even decades, in the making—has created an all-too-often impenetrable barrier between the young people in our city's schools and the cultural wonders that we know can transform their schools and even their lives.

That is why I say compassion is so important to public education and to partnerships. Face your potential partners—competitors, collaborators, and colleagues—with understanding of the material conditions of their work lives. Will jobs or job security, prestige, future funding be compromised by your partnership? *These issues cannot be ignored.* But if they are named and acknowledged, partners can work together to save face, funding, and jobs and, most importantly, bring dynamic arts education programming into the lives of more children.

Another crucial facet of compassion—for individual students, families, schools, and staff—is inextricably tied to the critical notion of uniform standards. You may be surprised to see where I am going with this . . .

I am a staunch believer in the necessity of standards. I am, of course, deeply pleased with the voluntary arts competency benchmarks developed through a wide-ranging collaboration within the arts education community and submitted to Education Secretary Richard Riley earlier this month. Without standards, or benchmarks, there is no accountability and there is no hope for equity. We must be explicit about what is expected from our students, *and these expectations must be uniform* for all young people.

We cannot have different expectations for different children depending on their color, or national origin, or home language, or family circumstances. This is the soil in which educational inequality

grows. **This is discrimination**. But while we must have uniform expectations, we must also have compassion. We must be honest, empathetic, and levelheaded, and recognize that children, schools, and teachers will require different levels and kinds of support to reach these standards, to arrive at these benchmarks. Just as standards are necessary for meaningful accountability and equity, compassion is necessary for meaningful standards.

I want to say one thing more about compassion, and that is about compassion for ourselves. Many adults are scared of the arts—we were told as kids that we had two left feet, couldn't carry a tune, mixed pigments gracelessly, colored outside of the lines.

Whether communicated by words, actions, jokes, raised eyebrows, or simple fact of expenditures of funds, the message was that we were not worthy, and that pursuit of the arts was not important in the real world. How many people in this room think wistfully of the creative avenues we wish we had pursued, how different and fulfilling our lives would be? But despite the damning denunciation of creativity that most of us so unfortunately experienced, we now live adult lives that are enriched immeasurably by the beauty of music, motion, color, and the communicative power of the arts.

I submit to you that as educators it is necessary that we acknowledge the stifling, critical messages about creativity that still abound in many of our cultures. Recognize that for many of our partners—in schools, corporations, foundations, and government agencies—the arts are still demeaned and undervalued. This is a sad fact about American life, but one that we ignore at our peril.

I urge you to hold fast to the value, strength, and clarity that the arts have brought to *your* lives, and fight to bring this power into the lives of the children in our nation's schools today. Do it in partnership, do it with compassion, and do it with imagination. Fight to bring the arts—as subject, teacher, pleasure and inspiration—more deeply into the lives of our children.

**Imagination** is the very stuff of the arts. It is also vital to making arts education work in the enormously varied schools and educational environments in which we and our students find themselves. Integrate the teaching of math and science with the teaching of art—the visual beauty of DNA strands, the mathematical complexity of jazz. The arts provide a window and a pathway to what every school in this country needs: experiential, culturally vibrant modes of teaching and learning that celebrate and reflect the diversity that has always been our nation's greatest strength. Embedding the arts in all of our teaching is risky, but more than risky, it is necessary.

Artists have survived through difficult times by cunning, flexibility, and adaptation to changing times and the economics and exigencies of patronage. And so must arts education be pliant and elastic to thrive. We must use the creativity and imagination that *are* the arts to *support* the arts.

When you write grant proposals, emphasize the arts as a powerful motivator. Children come to school on the days they will see or hear or make art! When you write lesson plans, think of the arts as a bias-free teaching tool. An astonishing program in New York City—"Talent Beyond Words," developed by the ArtsConnection and funded by federal Jacob Javitz monies for gifted and talented youth—has enabled ordinary classroom teachers to recognize and use the arts as a rigorous and dependable predictor of *talent,* and *giftedness,* that is not subject to the cultural and class biases to which so many "gifted and talented" programs are heir.

Ultimately, the arts *are* education: decoding a painting, interpreting the dramatic structure of a play, locating the essential rhythm of a dance or a piece of music—these analytic skills are precisely what civilized people mean by education. Furthermore, these analytic skills comprise a great deal of what industry seeks in potential employees, and what higher education looks for in candidates for bachelor's,

master's, and doctoral degrees. And **these are activities that young people are eager to take part in.**

Remember the line that used to appear on our own report cards—"Works and Plays Well with Others"? We rarely see that judgment explicitly stated in student evaluations today. But that is precisely the skill, the talent, the state of mind that is reflected—or which *absence* is reflected— in many of the social ills by which schools and communities throughout the nation are besieged. Those skills—"To Work and Play Well with Others"—are taught most effectively in and through the arts, through group painting, sculpture, and collage projects; team productions in dance, theater, and film; class trips to studios, performance halls, and museums to analyze and engage with the process and product of the arts.

There is no shame in using arts education in service of other critical educational goals, like motivation, attendance, persistence, values education, math, science, reading, or social studies. The shame is in denying the legacy of the arts as a flexible, wily survivor (think of Michelangelo lying cramped on his back in the Sistine Chapel), and denying to young people dynamic encounters with the arts in every aspect of their daily education.

In seeking funding for arts education and pursuing collaborations in arts education and educational reform, do not shun any potential partner. The stakes are too high, and, ultimately, the arts are too big. The creative power of the arts will win out—for children with varied abilities and disabilities, whose parents speak hundreds of different languages in their homes, and whose family structures reflect a diversity and elasticity that we may not understand, but must always respect. Children can't fail art—and the arts won't fail our children.

Thank you.

(Note: I would like to express my deep appreciation to Lynn Yanis for staff support in keeping me abreast of trends in arts education, and for her talented assistance in transforming my passion for the arts into words.)

# Position Statement of the California Arts Council

The California Arts Council is a state agency whose mission is to provide statewide leadership that enables and stimulates individuals and organizations to create, present, teach, and preserve outstanding art of all cultures, thereby enriching the quality of life for all Californians.

Arts in education has been a major component of the Arts Council's activities since its inception in 1976. Arts-in-education activities are funded through many Council programs, most notably the Artists in Residence, State Local Partnership Program, Touring and Presenting, Multi-Cultural Arts Development, and Organizational Support and Challenge programs.

The California Arts Council is presently working with the California Department of Education to develop guidelines and generate revenues for a new arts-in-education program mandated by the Local Arts Education Partnership Program, created by Senate Bill 1571 (1992). By producing and marketing a special California Arts license plate, with some of the revenues earmarked for this program, the Arts Council seeks to ensure that the arts become a basic part of education for California's children.

The arts must be an intrinsic component of education reform and excellence. The partnership efforts of the California Arts Council and the California Department of Education will seek to increase the momentum of current state and national efforts in education reform and the greater inclusion of arts across the curricula.

For more information about the activities of the California Arts Council, including the Local Arts Education Partnership Program, call (916) 227-2550.


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# Position Statement of the California Department of Education

The *Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* emphasizes the importance of arts education as part of the basic, core curriculum for all students. Understanding and doing the arts requires:

- Knowledgeable perception about aesthetic ideas and elements within the arts disciplines
- Personal experience in creating/performing in an arts discipline
- Knowledge of the cultural and historical contexts of the arts
- Personal development of criteria for making reasoned, critical aesthetic judgments about the arts

The California Department of Education publishes arts education documents that support the framework, including the Arts Advisory Committee's 1990 report *Strengthening the Arts in California Schools: A Design for the Future.* This report lists ten recommendations for specific actions by school boards, districts, educators, postsecondary institutions, and the Department of Education to achieve the goal of comprehensive arts education programs in California's public schools.

Several recommendations in the report apply directly to the keynote address by Ramon Cortines. The first recommendation calls for the California State Board of Education to adopt a policy endorsing arts education, which it did in 1989. This policy states, in part, that "arts education, which includes dance, drama/theatre, music, and visual arts, is an integral part of basic education for all students, kindergarten through grade twelve."

Additionally, the report calls for the development, publication, and promotion of curriculum resource documents in the visual and performing arts, collaboration with other agencies and organizations to strengthen arts education, and advocacy for the inclusion of the arts in basic education. These issues were encompassed in Dr. Cortines's address, in which he also shared his personal experience as an educational leader in New York and California.

Through collaborations between state and local agencies and parent and community groups, education in general is enriched and arts education specifically is strengthened.

For more information about the Department's arts activities, including the Local Arts Education Partnership Program, call (916) 657-3103.


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# Position Statement of the Getty Center for Education in the Arts

The Getty Center for Education in the Arts is dedicated to improving the quality and status of arts education in the nation's schools. The Center is one of seven operating programs of the J. Paul Getty Trust, a private operating foundation.

The Center's programs are primarily concerned with the visual arts and are guided by two premises: (1) knowledge of the arts is a principal means of understanding human experiences and transmitting cultural values; and (2) if arts education is to become a more meaningful part of general education, its content needs to be broadened to include instruction based on creating and performing the arts, understanding their cultural and historical contexts, and knowing how to analyze, critique, and judge works of art.

As a partner in the Governor's Conference on the Arts V, we support arts partnerships as a way to strengthen arts education.

LEILANI LATTIN DUKE
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